



WCDPS NEWSLETTER



VOLUME 8 NUMBER 1

21 August 2012

New Director appointed to the Department of Public Safety



Brian Henry / Tribune Review

In May of 2012, The Westmoreland County Board of Commissioners announced the hiring of Michael F. Brooker as the new Director of the Department of Public Safety.

Mr. Brooker and his wife reside in Hempfield Township, and he sees his job as the new Public Safety director as being diligent to insure that the county, the municipalities, the emergency responders, and the residents of the county are prepared for any emergency, big or small.

He previously served for 27 years in the U.S. Marine Corps, and believes that his years of service with the Marines has helped to prepare him for the challenges associated with his new position. He retired from the Marines in 2007, and took a position as a charter pilot with L.J. Aviation, which flies out of Arnold Palmer Regional Airport.

Mr. Brooker has an “open door” policy, and has been spending his first couple of months with the county listening to the thoughts and concerns of his staff and the emergency responders that we dispatch, in order to better understand what the current needs of are. If you have an interest in contacting Director Brooker, please do not hesitate to do so by sending an e-mail to mbrooker@co.westmoreland.pa.us. For a message from Director Brooker, see Page 6 of this newsletter, under “Directors Forum”.

Please join us in welcoming Director Brooker into our Emergency Management family.

Senior Dispatcher Retires

Senior TCO (telecommunications officer) Wendy McIlvaine put in her final day of service to the county on July 11, 2012. Wendy has been a dispatcher for 27 years, having started her career in 1985. Much has changed during her years of service, but her dedication to the residents of our county has never wavered.



Sean Stipp / Tribune Review

Commissioners Chuck Anderson and Tyler Courtney presented TCO McIlvaine with a Certificate of Special Recognition during a recent ceremony at the 9-1-1 Center.

“Every day, something of memory occurs. Every day there is something to be proud of, based on the outcome of the call.” she said. Historically, most dispatchers have not stayed long enough to retire from this job. Wendy is one of only two dispatchers who have stayed to retire from the department. “I think that’s a tribute to her dedication to serving the citizens of Westmoreland County. It speaks very highly of her.” said Director Michael Brooker.

TCO Mcilvaine is a resident of South Greensburg, and is looking forward to her retirement. “I have 365 vacation days a year now.” she said. Congratulations Wendy! Enjoy your retirement.....you’ve earned it!



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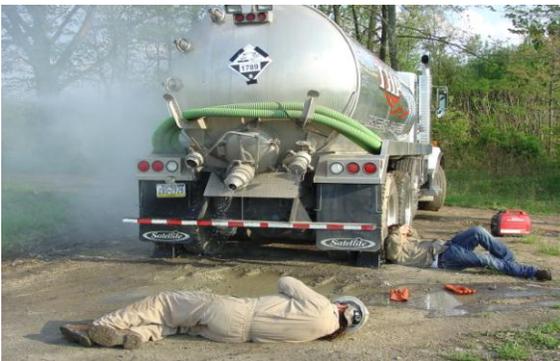


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HAZMAT Team 800 SARA Drill

On Tuesday, May 3, 2012, the Westmoreland County HAZMAT Team 800 participated in a Superfund Amendment Reauthorization Act (SARA) drill held onsite at an XTO Energy Marcellus Shale well in Fairfield Township. Over 100 participants, and 8 agencies attended and participated in the drill.



Team 800 responded to a scenario based reported Hydrochloric acid leak from a straight truck tanker at the well site, to assist fire units from Fairfield Township, Ligonier Township, Wilpen, Bolivar and New Florence, and EMS units from Fayette, Ligonier, and Murrysville Support unit.

Other agencies in attendance included the DEP with their mobile lab Command Post vehicle, and Somerset County HAZMAT Team 1.



The exercise involved two “victims” with a venue at Excela Health to simulate fine decon in reference to the drill scenario. This HSEEP compliant drill lasted approximately 4 hours from start to exercise end.



We would like to thank XTO Energy for their assistance with the planning and notifications to Fairfield Township, the provision of the tanker truck and “victims”, and the food and refreshments for the attendees at the hot wash which immediately followed the exercise.



The Department of Public Safety has a presentation available for any facility or agency wanting an overview of the drill, and will present it free of charge. For consideration, please contact Chris Tantlinger – HAZMAT Coordinator at ctanlin@co.westmoreland.pa.us or by phone to (724) 600-7349.



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WEBPAGE

Please visit us at our Webpage:

www.wcdps.org

WCDPS Hazard Mitigation

The Westmoreland County Hazard Mitigation Plan adopted by FEMA in 2009 requires all municipalities to create their own plan or adopt the County Plan. Without adopting a plan, your municipality will not be eligible for certain disaster funding and could impact other funding requests or projects. Hazard mitigation is unlike any other emergency preparedness or planning that you may be familiar. Please check that your municipality has adopted the County hazard mitigation plan and is coordinating the elements of their municipal planning code with hazard mitigation requirements.

The County has begun preparations for the 2014 renewal of the plan and will be requiring all municipalities to readopt or provide information on a community assessment survey and appoint a Hazard Mitigation Officer for their local municipality. Please visit the following link

An orientation package is provided for elected officials and emergency coordinators during a visit to the Westmoreland County Department of Public Safety, and vital update information is available through Chris Tantlinger – WCDPS Hazard Mitigation Officer. He can be contacted at ctantlin@westmoreland.pa.us or (724) 600-7349.

<http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=4547&PageID=457689&mode=2>

Ligonier Tornado Response

On June 1, 2012 at 5:09 P.M., the National Weather service issued a tornado warning for Westmoreland County. A strong band of storms was

in the Ligonier area, moving northeast at approximately 40 M.P.H. At 5:11 P.M., the phones at the 9-1-1 Center began to ring endlessly. A funnel cloud had been sighted in the Ligonier Township area, and it was rapidly heading north towards Fairfield Township.



View from Denny's Flat towards Robb Road

Emergency responders from the area were dispatched to multiple locations throughout the Ligonier Township & Fairfield Township region. The Westmoreland County Department of Public Safety staff deployed to assist the responders with communications, search and rescue, resource allocations, and damage assessment.

Fire units responded from all throughout Westmoreland County, including units from Wilpen, Waterford, Ligonier, Darlington, Bradenville, Youngstown, City of Greensburg, White Valley, Marguerite, Fairfield Township, Bolivar, New Florence, Claridge, and Team 211 Rough Terrain. EMS units from Ligonier, Laurel Valley, and Murrysville Rehab responded to treat any injured residents or responders. West Penn Power crews responded multiple teams to the area to remove downed power lines, to allow safe access for the emergency responders, and eventually to restore power to the affected area.





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An EOC was opened at the Ligonier Township building for the incident, providing a central gathering point for the Emergency Management / Responder teams. The Red Cross opened up a shelter for residents at the YMCA in Ligonier, with Westmoreland CART on scene there to care for any animals. PEMA responded to offer their assistance with damage assessment, and spent the next 2 days with the Westmoreland County Department of Public Safety teams and emergency responders scouring the affected areas to determine damage estimates.



The National Weather Service indicated that this was an EF-1 tornado. Damages included 43 homes, 6 businesses, and one Church camp, which sustained major damage.



Luckily, there were no major injuries reported due to this tornado. Everyone pitched in to assist, and “neighbors helping neighbors” became the motto

throughout the region. The area continues to recover from this tornado, and residents are keeping an ever vigilant eye to the sky!

FEMA Announcement

Weather alerts coming soon to smart phone near you

Millions of smart phone users will soon begin receiving text messages about severe weather from a sophisticated government system that can send a blanket warning to mobile devices in the path of a dangerous storm. The new Wireless Emergency Alerts system gives the National Weather Service a new way to warn Americans about menacing weather, even if they are nowhere near a television, radio or storm sirens. Beginning Thursday, the system will notify people about approaching tornadoes, hurricanes, blizzards and other threats. When a warning is issued for a specific county, a message of no more than 90 characters will cause late-model smart phones in that area to sound a special tone and vibrate. Users do not have to sign up for the service or pay for the text message. And people who prefer not to get the warnings can opt out of the system. A list of participating cell carriers is available at FEMA.gov. Check out the story at the following link:

<http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/story/2012-06-28/weather-alerts-smartphones/55898356/1>

<http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=4547&&PageID=457689&mode=2>

West Nile Program

The Westmoreland County West Nile Virus Program is in full swing continuing to monitor mosquito populations throughout Westmoreland County. As to this date, three mosquitoes in the county have tested positive for West Nile Virus. They were found in North Huntingdon Township, West Leechburg Borough, and Unity Township. Continued trapping and elimination of breeding sites will occur in response to the positive test. We will continue to stress the importance of source reduction to the public to help reduce mosquito activity. Any mosquito problems or concerns can be addressed by calling Lisa Stipp, Westmoreland County West Nile Virus Coordinator, at 724-600-7350.



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2012 MEETING DATES

*Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC): **EOC**

August 15, 2012 1:00
November 14, 2012 7:00

*Local Emergency Management Coordinator (LEMC): **EOC**

September 18, 2012 7:00
November 20, 2012 7:00

*Westmoreland County Gas Exploration Working Group (WCGEWG): **EOC**

September 19, 2012 1:00
October 17, 2012 1:00
November 21, 2012 1:00
December 19, 2012 1:00

* EMS Council: **EOC**

August 7, 2012 1:00
September 4, 2012 1:00
October 2, 2012 1:00
November 6, 2012 1:00
December 4, 2012 1:00

*Radio Committee Council: **EOC**

August 9, 2012 1:00
November 8, 2012 1:00

[News from READY.GOV](#)

The First Three Days After an Emergency

Local officials and relief workers will respond after a disaster, but they may not be able to reach everyone right away. That's why it's critical to be prepared to survive on your own for a minimum of three days in the event of an emergency. This may mean providing your own shelter, food, water, first-aid, sanitation and other basic needs.

Why Prepare? Disaster can strike quickly and without warning, anytime or anywhere. Would you know what to do if it happened today?

- Even though you may not be able to control a disaster or stop it from happening, you do have control over how you will respond to one.
- Protecting yourself and your family in an emergency requires planning. Being prepared will not only help you respond effectively in a dangerous situation, but it can also help you to lessen the impact of a disaster, and sometimes even avoid the danger completely.
- Remember, local responders may not be able to reach you immediately, or they may need to focus their efforts elsewhere. Your ability to be self-sufficient may be a matter of survival for you and your family. Don't wait for help that may not be available or may come too late. Take control of your own safety — it can save your life!

What You Can Do to Start

Ready to begin your emergency planning? The following are important preparations you should start making immediately:

- Be informed about the different types of emergencies that can occur and specific actions to take. In this site you can find detailed information on 10 potential emergencies in Pennsylvania.
- Make an emergency plan for you and your family in case disaster strikes.
- Get an emergency kit. Your emergency kit should be individually tailored to meet the basic survival needs of your family for three days to a week. For more information, refer to the website www.Ready.gov.

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[CENTER FOR SAFE SCHOOLS](#)

Risk and Vulnerability Assessments

In an effort to keep our schools safe, crime-free environments and to protect them from a terrorist attack, the Center for Safe Schools would like to make all school administrators aware of RISK AND VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENTS, an initiative of the Pennsylvania State Police, offered free of charge. Assessments provide comprehensive examinations of physical facilities and operational procedures; identify critical assets, threat potential and vulnerabilities; and offer recommendations to improve security. To schedule a FREE assessment, contact the Pennsylvania State Police Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Team (RVAT) at 717-346-4085, 717-364-2634 or

ra-pspoffdomesticsecurity@state.pa.us.

For assistance in updating or completing your school district's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), contact Sandy Smythe – Westmoreland County DPS Safe Schools Coordinator at 724-600-7306 or by E-Mail to ssmythe@co.westmoreland.pa.us.

[WESTMORELAND COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS](#)

Belle Vernon Area
Burrell
Derry Area
Franklin Regional
Greater Latrobe
Greensburg Salem
Hempfield Area
Jeannette City
Kiski Area

Ligonier Valley
Monessen
Mount Pleasant Area
New Kensington/Arnold
Norwin
Penn Trafford
Southmoreland
Yough

[DIRECTORS FORUM](#)

It has been an exciting and rewarding start to serving the citizens of Westmoreland County as the Director of Public Safety. As you can read in this newsletter, I had to hit the ground running when a Category EF-1 tornado touched down in Ligonier and Fairfield Townships on June 1st. During the tornado response, I saw first-hand the professionalism and dedication of my staff in action, both in the 9-1-1 Call Center and the Emergency Management Team out on the scene. They joined local and neighboring emergency responders and managers in responding to the thirty-seventh tornado in the County since 1800; according to the National Weather Service, this places Westmoreland County “number 1” for tornadoes in the Commonwealth. I also saw the teamwork and “neighbor helping neighbor” ethos from law enforcement, fire, emergency medical service, and our trained special teams-- along with partners such as the Red Cross and West Penn Power-- that every County resident can be proud of in times of natural disaster or an emergency situation. After a three year hiatus, I hope that you find this edition of the **Westmoreland County Department of Public Safety (WCDPS) Newsletter** to be informative and I look forward to any comments or feedback that you might have. Communication is one of the keys to providing effective public safety. Whether issues concerning one of the over 800 daily calls we receive at the 9-1-1 Call Center, or working with the various Councils, Associations, and Committees with whom we partner in providing public safety and emergency services to the 65 municipalities and over 365,000 residents in the County, I will always pursue open dialog and discussion. My door will always be open (after getting through our security gate) and I encourage you to stop by and tell me what's on your mind and how we can better work together. In the next newsletter, I hope to tell you about some of the exciting and necessary projects we are working on at WCDPS to fulfill our mission of supporting the direction, management and employment of emergency services and resources in Westmoreland County to ensure the public safety of county residents, 24 hours a day every day.



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If you have any comments, suggestions, or topics you would like to see addressed in future Newsletters, please contact Sandy Smythe – Administrative Officer at (724) 600-7306 or to ssmythe@co.westmoreland.pa.us.